

Umar Hadi, Abdul Mu'ti, et al.



**ISLAM**  
in  
**INDONESIA**

A to Z Basic Reference





**ISLAM in INDONESIA**  
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**INDONESIA**  
A to Z Basic Reference

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Umar Hadi  
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## Islam in Indonesia

A to Z Basic Reference

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## Introduction

By Umar Hadi

Director of Public Diplomacy,

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A home to over 200 million Muslims, Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world. Moreover, it is now often said that Indonesia is a place where Islam, democracy and modernity do flourish together.

However, the above statements are not self-explanatory. There is a need to broaden the knowledge about Islam in Indonesia; and to explain the fact that Islam is well and alive in the pluralistic nation.

Perhaps one should start from the basic foundations of the Indonesian state.

First, Indonesia is not an Islamic state—and Islam is not the religion of the state. In 1945, our national consensus established Indonesia as a modern nation-state. It was not based on race, religion or ethnicity. However, the 1945 Constitution also maintains that the state has the obligation to promote religious life of the Indonesian people. Hence,

it is not based on the concept of separation of state and religion as generally understood in a secular state.

Secondly, the state's ideology "Pancasila" represents the way of life that adheres and supports diversity in the livelihood of people across the archipelago. Differences are accepted and acknowledged—even celebrated, but always within the process of finding and strengthening the unity of the nation. It is a continuous process of nation-building.

Third, religious life of Indonesian Muslims is mainly conducted, and nurtured, in the realm of civil society. It is simply because some of the largest Muslim movements and organizations had already been in existence even before the Republic was born. Hence a harmonious relationship between the state and civil society is critical to the survival of the nation.

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This publication represents a unique collaboration between the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Center for Dialogue and Cooperation among Civilizations (CDCC). Aiming at introducing the Islamic terms, movements and thoughts in Indonesia, this book is expected to provide you with basic knowledge on the subjects. Further readings would be necessary for those who wish to explore further.

Jakarta, September 24, 2009



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## Foreword

By Abdul Mu'ti

Executive Director

Centre for Dialogue and Co-operation amongst Civilisations  
(CDCC)

Centre for Dialogue and Co-operation amongst Civilisations (CDCC) is kindly pleased to appreciate the publication of the book *Islam in Indonesia, A to Z Basic Reference*, joint publishing between The Directorate of Public Diplomacy, The Department of Foreign Affairs and CDCC. CDCC believes that academic publication about Islam in Indonesia will contribute in the discourse on what and how Islam in Indonesia apparently emerges in the Muslim World.

Islam in Indonesia is different in terms of Islamic school of thoughts (*madzhab*), organisations, and political affiliations. Islam practises various *madzhab*s either of theology or of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*): In Indonesia, Muslims mainly practise *Ash'ariyah* rather than *Mu'tazilah* or *Shiite*. However, it does not mean that Muslims follow neither *Mu'tazilah* nor *Shiite*. There are some *Shiite* and *Mu'tazila* followers in Indonesia. In addition, Muslims in Indonesia mostly follow *Syafiiyah* in terms of *fiqh* rather than *Hanafi-*



yah, Malikiyah, Hanbaliyah or Ja'fariyah. These numerous Islamic school of thoughts indicate somehow that Muslims in Indonesia has heritage to be moderate.

Furthermore, Islam in Indonesia has various organisations as well as political affiliations. It illustrates that Muslims in Indonesia engage in such kind of civil society, whereas at the same time involve in influencing policy making process.

Eventually, CDCC cherishes hope that hospitable Islam still exist and has been kept by Indonesian. So that Indonesia will become the country of the largest moderate Muslim in the world, as it is predicted by Fazlurrahman that the raising Islam will emerge from the East (Indonesia).

Jakarta, September 16, 2009



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PART 1

ISLAMIC TERMS  
IN INDONESIA





### ABANGAN

The *abangan* refers to Javanese Muslims who practice a more syncretic version of Islam, than the more orthodox *santri* (sometimes also referred to as *putihan*). The *abangan* are most often viewed to stand in contrast to the *santri*, and both are often referred to as *aliran* (streams) in Javanese society.

The term, apparently derived from the Javanese word *abang* (= red, regarded as antonymous with *putih* = white), was first popularized by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) when describing three variants of Islam in Java (*abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi*) in his *Religion of Java*. However, the meaning has since been debated. Some scholars

(including Geertz) hold that *abangan* people are more inclined to follow a local system of beliefs (sometimes recognized as *adat*, and sometimes recognized as a set of beliefs distinct from religion) which some view as a syncretistical blend between Islam and older animist, Hindu and Buddhist traditions. However, other scholars argue that generally what *abangan* believe and practice is undoubtedly a part of the Muslim faith; beliefs and practices which could also be found in other parts of the Muslim world. While Geertz distinguished *abangan* belief (which centers on spirits, magic, and the ceremonial feast/*slametan*, and is associated with peasants) from the similarly syncretistic

Javanese aristocratic *priyayi* tradition (which centers on art and mysticism, and is associated with bureaucrats), most observers use the term *priyayi* to indicate aristocratic status and culture in general and regard it as part of the broader *abangan* or *kejawen* category.

Throughout history of modern Indonesia, *abangan* often became one of the bases for so-called 'nationalist political parties'. *Abangan-santri* categorization was therefore quite important not also in describing Javanese society, but also in analyzing Indonesian politics, particularly before 1990s. However, ongoing Islamization in Indonesia has made the *abangan-santri* categorization less and less important. □

#### Further readings:

Clifford Geertz, *Religion of Java*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

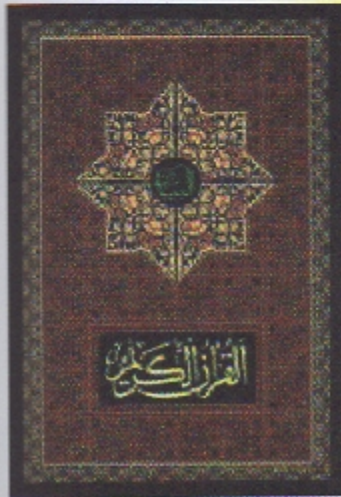
M.C. Ricklefs, *Polarising Javanese Society: Islamic and other visions (c. 1830-1930)*, Singapore: NUS Press, 2007.

Zaini Muchtarom, *Islam di Jawa dalam Perspektif Santri dan Abangan*, Salemba Dinlyah, 2002.

#### AHLI KITAB

*Ahli kitab* (Arabic: *ahl al-kitāb*, literally meaning 'people of the book') are non-Muslim peoples who, according to the Qur'an, received scriptures which were revealed by God before the time of Muhammad, most notably Christians and Jews. The generally accepted interpretation is that pre-Islamic revealed texts are the *Taurāt*, *Zabūr*, and the *Injīl* (roughly equivalent to the Jewish Torah, the Book of Psalms, and the Four Christian Gospels respectively).

The term *ahl al-kitāb* is taken in classical orthodox Islam to refer to followers of monotheistic Abrahamic religions which are older



The Holly Quran

than Islam. This includes all Christians, all Jews, and Sabians. Many Islamic scholars agreed that Zoroastrians should also be included.

In modern Indonesian Islamic thought, there have been some efforts—most importantly by Nurcholish Madjid—to reinterpret this term to also include the followers of some other religions like Buddhism and Hinduism which have their

own “holy books”. However, this interpretation has not become familiar among Muslims. □

#### Further readings:

Muhammad Galib, *Ahl al-Kitab: Makna dan Cakupannya*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998.

Nurcholish Madjid, “Interpreting the Qur’anic Principle of Religious Pluralism” in Abdullah Saeed (ed.), *Approaches to the Qur’an in Contemporary Indonesia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 209–224.

Quraish Shihab, “Ahlul Kitab”, in *Wawasan Al-Quran: Tafsir Maudu’i atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat*, Bandung: Mizan, 1996, p. 347–371.

#### AHLU SUNNAH WAL JAMAAH

*Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah* (often abbreviated in Indonesia as *Aswaja*, Arabic: *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā’ah*, literally meaning: people of the example (of Muhammad) and community) is also referred to as *Sunni* or *Ahlu Sunnah* for short. This

## PART 2

# ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN INDONESIA

## Editors' Note

The list of organizations in the following pages may not be conclusive. The list simply includes the most obvious and well known organizations, without necessarily providing judgment on substantiality of those organizations' ideology, networks, management, leadership and memberships. Hence, some organizations in the list may have only a very small membership base and does not reflect the mainstream ideology of the overwhelming majority of Indonesian Muslims, but they do appear quite frequently in the media.

The list may not describe in depth the relationships between the listed organizations with other societal and political institutions in Indonesia. Although there may be few organizations that support, or being affiliated to, certain political parties—or may even have links to overseas and transnational movements, most of them are indigenous Indonesian civil society in the realm of Islamic "dakwah" and providing educational, health, and social services. However, the list does reflect the very wide theological, ideological and political spectrum in Indonesian society. This does not deny the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Indonesian society subscribes to the mainstream and moderate outlook of Islam.

The two largest organizations, the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah, were established in the early twentieth



century—before the Republic existed. They were both very influential in providing education to the common people. Today, not only that they remain important providers of education but they also play substantial roles in providing health services, orphanages, and social-economic empowerment at the grassroots level. Hence they are complementary to the role of the State. These two organizations were among the main actors in the establishment of Indonesia as a modern nation-state. Today, they remain among the strongest advocates of the unitary Republic, the state's ideology "Pancasila", and democracy. □

**AISIYIAH**

Aisyiyah is the women wing of Muhammadiyah established in Yogyakarta on May 19, 1917 (some would say April 22, 1917; the date of the meeting in which the name Aisyiyah was agreed upon), by Muhammadiyah's early leaders, including Soed Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of the Muhammadiyah, which served as its first chairperson. The name Aisyiyah is taken from one of the Prophet Muhammad's wife, Aisha (in Indonesian spelling: Aisyah). Aisyiyah in Arabic means the followers of Aisha.

Aisyiyah was established initially to promote the status of Indonesian women through informal teaching. Muslim women were introduced to the principles of



### AISIYIAH

Aisyiyah is the women's wing of Muhammadiyah established in Yogyakarta on May 19, 1917 (some would say April 22, 1917; the date of the meeting in which the name Aisyiyah was agreed upon), by Muhammadiyah's early leaders, including Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, the wife of the Muhammadiyah's founder, which served as its first chairperson. The name Aisyiyah is taken from one of the Prophet Muhammad's wife, Aisha (in Indonesian spelling: Aisyah). Aisyiyah in Arabic means the followers of Aisha.

Aisyiyah was established initially to promote the status of Indonesian women through informal teaching. Muslim women were introduced to the principles of



Islam based on the Quran and the Sunnah. A later aim was to guide women as wives, mothers, and members of society. Women were encouraged to contribute to family income mainly through the sale of their handicrafts.

Aisyiyah is well-known for the kindergartens it runs everywhere. Indeed, it established what might be the first kindergarten run by Indonesians in 1919

named Frobel, which later uniformly named TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal. Its activities, however, include a wide variety of programs. The organization has been involved in promoting family planning, maternal and child health, and status of rural women, as well as in other programs concerned with population and environment. Its program activities also include assistance for orphans and disabled children, care of the aged, maternity and nursery centers, health centers, and training for improving family welfare. Aisyiyah established a variety of schools and religious centers for women's improvement of the knowledge and practice of Islam. Since 1926 it published a monthly newsletter, *Suara Aisyiyah* (Voice of Aisyiyah) which survived the Dutch colonization, the Japanese occupation, and

national independence.

As of 2009, Aisyiyah manages not less than 7093 education centers, including kindergartens (which reached 5865), playgroups, early childhood education centres, daycares, elementary Quranic schools (TPA/TPQ), elementary schools (mostly Islamic), schools for difable, junior high schools, senior high schools, Islamic boarding schools, higher education institutions, and outside-school education centres. It also manages not less than 280 health centres, including the village integrated health posts (posyandu), child birth clinics, medical centres, women's and children hospitals, and public hospitals. In addition, it manages not less than 459 social centers, including shelter houses (*ramah singgah*), orphanages, and elderly care centers.

Within the organization,

special bureaus were established for the preaching of Islam, lower and middle education, higher education, social welfare, economic affairs, health, environment, culture, and advocacy, research and development, public relations and publications, training cadres. Although funding is provided mainly by its members, it cooperates with the government, semi-governmental women's groups, other governmental organizations, as well as international organizations.

Its organizational structure includes board offices at the national, provincial, municipal, district, and district level. Aisyiyah has 33 provincial boards (*komite pimpinan wilayah*). This means it exists in all Indonesian provinces. As of 2009, it has 370 main

special bureaus were established for the preaching of Islam, lower and middle education, higher education, social welfare, economic affairs, health and environment, culture, law and advocacy, research and development, public relations and publications, and training cadres. Although its funding is provided mainly by its members, in running its programs Aisiyiyah often cooperated with the government, semi-governmental women's groups, other non-governmental organizations, as well as international organizations.

Its organizational structure includes board officials at the national, provincial, municipal, district, and sub-district level. Aisiyiyah has 33 provincial boards (called *pimpinan wilayah*). This means it exists in all Indonesian provinces. And as of 2009, it has 370 municipal

boards (*pimpinan daerah*), 2332 district boards (*pimpinan cabang*), and 6924 sub-district boards (*pimpinan ranting*). □

Official site:  
[www.aisyiyah.or.id](http://www.aisyiyah.or.id)

#### AL-HIDAYAH

Al-Hidayah or Pengajian Al-Hidayah is a Muslim women organization affiliated to Golongan Karya (Golkar) Party, the biggest "political party" in New Order Indonesia and now remains one of the biggest—during New Order, Golongan Karya (Functional Groups) was not officially called a political party. Al-Hidayah was established on 5 October 1979 by Amir Murtono (chairman of Golkar at that time). Its first chairperson was his wife, Naniek Amir Murtono, and since then the wife of the party's chairman usually serves as Al-



## PART 3

# ISLAMIC THOUGHTS IN INDONESIA

Indonesia is a country with a long and rich history of Islamic thought and practice. The country's population is predominantly Muslim, and Islam has played a central role in the development of Indonesian society and culture. This book explores the evolution of Islamic thought in Indonesia, from its early roots to the present day. It examines the influence of various Islamic schools of thought, the role of the state, and the challenges faced by the Indonesian Muslim community in the modern world. The book is a comprehensive and accessible introduction to the complex and vibrant world of Islamic thought in Indonesia.



## Indonesian Islam, Mainstream Muslims and Politics\*

Azyumardi Azra

Professor of history; former rector of Syarif Hidayatullah  
State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia

Indonesian Islam—or to a great degree, Southeast Asian Islam in general—has a number of distinctive characters vis-à-vis Middle Eastern Islam. Indonesian Islam, by and large, is a moderate, accommodative kind of Islam, and the least Arabicized Islam. Therefore, Indonesian Islam is much less rigid compared to Middle Eastern Islam. For that reason, *Newsweek* magazine not long time ago call Indonesian Islam as “Islam with a smiling face”; Islam which in many ways is compatible with modernity, democracy, and plurality. Despite these distinctions, Indonesian Islam is not less Islamic compared to Islam somewhere else. Geographically, Islamic Indonesia is far away from the Middle East, but that does not mean that Indonesian Islam is religiously peripheral.

### The Pancasila State

With its distinctive characters, it is not surprising, therefore, if Indonesia—the largest Muslim nation in the world—according to a report entitled “Freedom in the World 2002: The Democracy Gap” released by Freedom House New York is one of “bright spots” of democracy together with other pre-dominant least Arabized Muslim countries such as Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Iran. Freedom House found that while there is an obvious democracy deficit in the Islamic Arab world—which is called as Arabic core—democratic ferment is considerable in countries which have predominant or significant Muslim population such as Albania, Bangladesh, Djibouti, the Gambia, Indonesia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Turkey.

The fact that democratic ferment is considerable in Indonesia can be clearly seen in the success of Indonesia to conduct general elections in 1999 and 2004. The two elections have shown that Indonesian Muslims do not have any problem with democracy; in fact, Islam is compatible with democracy. The peaceful general elections of 2004, which included direct presidential elections, has consolidated democracy in the country even further. Indonesia is now not only the largest Muslim country, but also the third largest democracy in the world, after India and USA.

It is important to point out that as the third largest democracy and the largest Muslim country in the world, neither is Indonesia an Islamic state, nor is Islam the official religion of the Indonesian state. Despite the fact that almost 90 per cent of Indonesian total population (more than 220

million, as of August 2004) are Muslims, the Indonesian state is just and democratic, people-driven, representative, people-based, and non-theocratic in form (although a lot of democratic and cultural values of Muslims, such as all pillars of the fundamental are) spirit, are present in the state in Indonesian means—like particularly in the idea.

The attempt of theocratic or theocratic state is observed in the Indonesian state since the 'secular' history of the 1940s. The belief in the religion is not. In fact, the Ministry of Bureaucracy



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